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CIA 2-04.2 General

# ON THE WAY TO 1984

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GEORGE ORWELL'S Oceania had a vast and efficient information agency; its name was the Ministry of Truth and its purpose was to make every citizen of Oceania think the right thoughts. "The past is whatever the records agree upon," was its motto and it wrote, or rewrote, the records. Now the information agencies of our own State and Defense Departments, the USIA, and the CIA, seem bent on creating an American Ministry of Truth and imposing upon the American people a record of the past which they themselves write.

It is the CIA whose activities have been most insidious and are most notorious, but the CIA has no monopoly on brainwashing. Consider, for example, the film *Why Vietnam*. It is "one of our most popular films"; it is distributed free to high schools and colleges throughout the country, and to other groups who ask for it—as hundreds doubtless do. Its credentials are beyond reproach; it was produced by the Defense Department and sponsored by the State Department, and President Johnson, Secretary Rusk, and Secretary McNamara all pitch in to give it authenticity.

The USIA is not permitted to carry on propaganda within the United States, and the reason is not that the American people do not choose to give government authority to indoctrinate them. Government, they believe, already has

every method of communication with the people that it can properly use. The President, members of the cabinet, the armed services—these can command attention for whatever they have to say, at any time. There is therefore no necessity, and no excuse, for government propaganda, no need for government to resort to subterfuge in its dealings with the people.

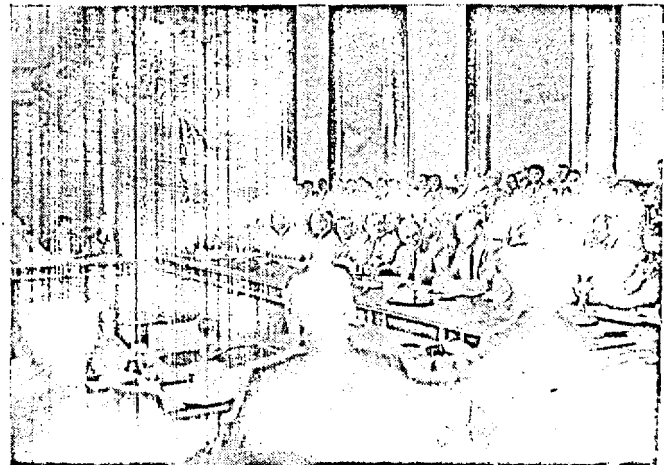
What we have always held objectionable is not overt publicity by government, but covert indoctrination. *Why Vietnam* is, in fact, both. It is overt enough, but while it is clear to the sophisticated that it is a government production and therefore an official argument, the film is presented not as an argument, but as history. Needless to say it is not history. It is not even journalism. It is propaganda, naked and unashamed. As the "fact sheet" which accompanies it states, it makes "four basic points," and makes them with the immense authority of the President: that the United States is in Vietnam "to fulfill a solemn pledge," that "appeasement is an invitation to aggression," that "the United States will not surrender or retreat," and that we—but alas not the other side—are always "ready to negotiate a settlement."

Government, which represents all the people and presumably all points of view, should have higher standards than private enterprise in the presentation of news or history. But *Why Vietnam* is well below the standards of objectivity, accuracy, and impartiality which we are

accustomed to in newspapers and on television; needless to say, as scholarship it is absurd. In simple, uncritical, and one-dimensional terms it presents the official view of the war in Vietnam with never a suggestion that there is or could be any other view. When Communists sponsor such propaganda, we call it "brainwashing."

Let us look briefly at this film, for it is doubtless a kind of dry run of what we will get increasingly in the future. It begins—we might have anticipated this—with a view of Hitler and Chamberlain at Munich, thus establishing at the very outset that "appeasement" is "a short cut to disaster." Because the free nations of the world failed to stop aggression in the Thirties, they almost lost their freedom and had to fight a gigantic war to survive; if we fail to stop "aggression" now we, too, may lose our freedom. For "we have learned at terrible cost that retreat does not bring safety and that weakness does not bring peace, and it is this lesson that has brought us to Vietnam."

Here, then, is the first distortion of history and it is a preview of what is to come throughout the film. The aggression of the great totalitarian powers in the Thirties in fact bears little analogy to the civil war in Vietnam, nor is the Geneva Agreement of 1954 to be equated with appeasement. The fact is almost precisely the opposite of that implied by *Why Vietnam*. One of President Roosevelt's objectives in the Second World War was to get the French out



—Photos by Wide World.

Meeting at Munich, 1938, and the Geneva Conference of 1954—"The aggression of the great totalitarian powers in the Thirties bears little analogy to the civil war in Vietnam, nor is the Geneva agreement of 1954 to be equated with appeasement."